Expansion work of Madurai Airport

470. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for the delay in carrying out the expansion works at Madurai Airport;

(b) by when the expansion works will be completed; and

(c) what is the length of the present runway at Madurai Airport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) The work at Madurai Airport was delayed due to poor performance of the contractor, closure of sand quarries by State Government and unprecedented rain in Tamil Nadu during the currency of the contract. However, the work for extension of runway in Madurai has been completed in all resepcts during January, 2008. The length of the runway after extension is 2280 meters.

Running of Flying Training Institutes by Foreign Firms

471. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of a severe shortage of trained pilots in India and situation could get worse as airlines induct more aircraft to cash in on booming aviation sector that has grown by over 25 per cent in recent years;

(b) whether it is a fact that current strength of Indian pilots is only 3,950 the gap is met by employing foreign pilots; and

(c) if so, whether Government has so far allowed any foreign firm to set up wholly owned subsidiaries to run flying training institutes, technical training institutions, helicopter and seaplane services etc. to meet shortage of Indian pilots?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) On 30-01-2008, Government has approved that upto 100% FDI will be permitted on the automatic route for flying training institutes, technical training institutions and helicopter services/seaplane services in aviation sector.

Technology upgradation of Airports

472. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many airports including Bangalore's are not equipped with a secondary surveillance radar to assess approach and departure positions of aircrafts;

(b) whether it is also a fact that some nineteen million people fly the Indian skies every year and this is going up at a staggering five million people per year and the air traffic control at airports is haphazard by world standards, bedevilled both by poorly trained personnel and creaky old technology; and